

HORIZONS

Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims



The Federal Emergency Management Agency

May 10, 2002

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TOLL-FREE TELEREGISTRATION AND INFORMATION LINE:

1-888-748-1853

EMAIL:

cerrograndenewsletter@fema.gov
director@cerrograndfire.com

WEBSITES:

www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com
www.fema.gov/cerrogrande

SERVICE CENTER:

Located in Los Alamos in the Mari-
Mac Plaza, across from Smith's
grocery, between GNC and the Blue
Window Bistro

Hours:

9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Monday-Friday

OMBUDSMAN:

Individual and Business

Bill Lehman

Office: 661-3121

Cellular: 505-934-9698

MITIGATION SPECIALIST:

Dale Lowe

Office: 661-3121

Cellular: 505-934-9768

THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

As we mark the second anniversary of the Cerro Grande Fire, we have an opportunity to look around at all the recovery happening in our midst--Los Alamos County has issued more than 100 building permits to those who lost their homes in the fire, efforts are happening across the community to make the Los Alamos more fire resistant, and people are completing the Cerro Grande Claims process.

It's encouraging to me to see that of the 420 claims we received from people who lost their homes in the fire, 67 percent have been completed. FEMA has paid \$108 million in compensation to those who lost their homes--and has paid \$287 million in total, thus far. Our office has completed 90 percent of the 16,000 claims that have been submitted.

We continue to accept new claims until August 28, 2002. As we work to complete the remaining 10 percent we remain committed to assisting our claimants in overcoming any challenges they may face as they complete their claims.

As I think back about the disaster that changed many lives forever, I am inspired by the many individuals who are moving beyond the tragedy and rebuilding their lives. This spirit is creating a community that is stronger than ever before.

As a New Mexican I will never forget the days following the Cerro Grande Fire when thousands of strangers from nearby communities opened their doors to those who were evacuated, hundreds of thousands of dollars were given without question to charities and homemade burritos were sent in massive quantities to the firefighters on the front lines. Today, we see this same spirit of generosity -- volunteers replanting thousands of trees, a local church that continues to host and feed survivors as they work through challenges, and survivors mentoring their neighbors through the tough process of completing personal property lists.

We realize that although compensation is an important part of the recovery process, it is not the whole thing. Compensation doesn't make people whole, but it does give them choices about what kind of future they choose to build for themselves, their families and this community.

I can be contacted directly at: director@cerrograndfire.com.

Mitigation Menu

Here is the list of measures that have been pre-approved for individual mitigation. These measures are priority projects for creating more fire-resistant homes. They do not require environmental clearance. Because the goal of mitigation is to fund reasonable and cost-effective projects, percentages or a pre-determined dollar amount are assigned to each measure. The percentages are for compensation paid for structures and land - not the entire claim.

- Appendages and Projections – (2%)
- Attic Ventilation Openings – (0.25%)
- Detached Accessory Structures – (2%)
- Exterior Doors – (1%)
- Exterior Glazing – (1.5%)
- Exterior Walls – (4%)
- Internal Fire Sprinklers – (2.5%)
- Protection of Eaves – (1%)
- Roof Covering – (3.5%)
- Vents – (0.25%)
- Gutters and Downspouts (0.25%)
- Defensible Space - \$1800.00

Anyone whose residence was damaged or destroyed as a result of the Cerro Grande Fire and received \$2000 or more in compensation may apply for mitigation funds toward another home which they are rebuilding, purchasing, or own within the four core counties--Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, and Santa Fe. Claimants can apply for up to 15% of the compensation they received for losses and damages to their structure and land. Claimants must file for mitigation and have the measures completed by August 28, 2003.

Although a steady stream of new mitigation claims have been filed, Approximately 650 individuals who are eligible for mitigation have not yet filed their mitigation claims.

Need More Help?

If you have questions or concerns about your claim, our local operators can help you with questions or concerns about your claim.

If you still have concerns or questions about your claim, call your claims reviewer or the Cerro Grande Community Ombudsman, Bill Lehman. The ombudsman's job is to work as an advocate for the claimant and to assist them in resolving any problems or concerns they may have about their claim.

To reach Bill, call 1-888-748-1853 and ask to speak with the Community Ombudsman or call him directly at 505-661-3121.

How To File and Resolve A Small Damage Claim

If you believe you suffered a loss as a result of the Cerro Grande Fire, you have until August 28, 2002 to file a claim with FEMA's Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims in order to receive compensation. Here's how the process works for a simple smoke damage claim:

1. Call the toll-free Registration and Information Line at 1-888-748-1853 between 9 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday.
2. You will receive a claim packet within two weeks of filing your claim by phone.
3. Based on the information you supplied by phone, the packet may include a settlement offer for your claim.
4. Read, complete and include all the required information.
5. Choose whether to accept or reject the compensation amount offered.
6. Send in the claims packet by the due date listed on the letter you receive with the packet.
7. If you accept the compensation amount offered and you have submitted all the required documentation, you can expect to receive a check within six weeks.
8. If you reject the compensation amount offered, write and sign a letter explaining why your award compensation is incorrect, include all information required and support your appeal with as much documentation as possible - i.e. receipts, photographs, etc.
9. If you are still unhappy with the decision, a two-level appeal process is available:
 - Appeal to the Director of the Office Cerro Grande Fire Claims
 - Elect binding arbitration, or judicial review by the U.S. District Court of New Mexico.

Cerro Grande Fire Recovery Timeline

Cerro Grande Fire begins	May 4, 2000
FEMA declares Disaster-1329	May 13, 2000
Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act enacted by Congress	July 13, 2000
Interim Final Rule is published	Aug. 28, 2000
OCGFC Service Centers open	Aug. 28, 2000
Final Rule is published	Mar. 21, 2001
\$100 million in claims paid	April 27, 2001
First Anniversary of the fire	May 4, 2001
Last day to file Notice of Loss	Aug. 28, 2002
Last day for Mitigation Claims	Aug. 28 2003